



Afternoon Alert - Friday, December 15, 2017

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HEADLINES

Noon news

NHK led with a report that business sentiment among large Japanese manufacturers rose to its highest level in 11 years in December, according to the Bank of Japan's Tankan survey released on Friday. TBS and TV Asahi gave top play to reports that the Abe cabinet has endorsed a plan to freeze the assets of 19 additional North Korean entities in response to the latest ballistic missile launch by North Korea, saying that Japan will be imposing sanctions on a total of 103 entities and 108 individuals. NTV and Fuji TV led with reports on a fire that broke out at an apartment in Beppu, Oita, yesterday.

INTERNATIONAL

North Korean defector sheds light on boats washing up on Japanese shores

NHK reported this morning on an interview with a North Korean defector about the many North Korean boats drifting into coastal areas in Japan. The defector said there has been a sharp increase in the number of North Koreans who have been engaging in fishing because it is an easy way to earn cash. She also said that since North Korea sold its coastal fishing rights to China, overfishing by Chinese boats has caused a reduction in catch for North Korean boats, forcing them to go further out to sea without sufficient equipment.

According to the network, the defector is a woman in her 40s who defected from North Korea to South Korea three years ago. She worked for a seafood wholesaler with operations mainly in the eastern part of North Korea. She was quoted as saying: "If you go out fishing for a month, you can earn enough money to live for a year. If you sell seafood to China, you can also obtain foreign currency." She reportedly said groups of North Korean residents chip in to build wooden boats equipped with Chinese-made engines or use fishing boats owned by the military or a state-owned

company to engage in fishing.

Concerning the wooden boat found in waters off Matsumae, Hokkaido, which had a plate that read "No. 854 unit of the Korean People's Army," the North Korean defector pointed out that it was probably a military fishing boat that was rented to ordinary citizens and that the crew are not members of the military.

- [Japan expands unilateral sanctions on N. Korea](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Reason for comfort women statue installed in San Francisco](#) (Asahi, Online)
- [Abe conveys concerns to Myanmar president over human rights violations](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Cartoon: Number of the year](#) (Mainichi)

ECONOMY

Mitsubishi Aircraft to accelerate development of MRJ

NHK reported this afternoon that Mitsubishi Aircraft has decided to develop three additional test planes next year in order to accelerate the development of Japan's first passenger jet, the MRJ. Mitsubishi has considerably delayed the delivery date of the MRJ due to a series of problems. According to the network, Mitsubishi will accelerate the development of the MRJ with a total of eight test planes in order to meet the delivery deadline set for mid-2020. Among the three new test planes, two of them will be used for flight tests to be conducted by Japanese and U.S. authorities sometime next year, and the other one is expected to be used for ground tests.

- [High court blocks restart of Ehime nuclear reactor, cites volcano risk](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Concerns over JICA's fund shortage frightens industry group](#) (Sande Mainichi)
- [Fukushima nuclear disaster victims bring class action lawsuit against GE in U.S.](#) (Shukan Asahi)

POLITICS

- [Prime minister's schedule on Dec. 14, 2017](#) (Nikkei)
- [Gov't seeking to double AI budget to over 100 billion yen](#) (Sankei)
- [Speculation grows that LDP accepted Komeito tax request with eye on constitutional revision](#) (Mainichi)

- [Cartoon: Democratic Party](#) (Asahi)
- [Japan pledges \\$2.9 bil. for universal health coverage](#) (Kyodo News)

OPINION POLLS

- [70% opposed to proposal of constitutional amendments next year, cabinet support rate drops to 42%, Jiji Press poll](#) (Jiji)
- [Dramatic drop in negative views among Japan, China public on bilateral ties, poll](#) (Mainichi)
- [Improvement in nations' views of Japan-China ties facilitates leaders of exchange visits](#) (Mainichi)

SOCIETY

Middle-aged cohort sees salaries drop

NHK's "Close-up Gendai+" reported that a survey conducted by a University of Tokyo professor found that while salaries have increased for most age groups over the last five years, the salaries of those aged 35 to 44 have dropped significantly. Those in their early 40s saw a decline in their monthly salaries of more than 20,000 yen from five years ago. The program said this is because the time when they began working after graduating from college in around 2000 was called the "employment ice age" and it was extremely difficult to find a good job. The program said the salaries of forty-somethings remain low, making it difficult for them to get married. In addition, even though the economy is picking up, it is difficult for people in this age group to change jobs.

The program also said there is now a problem known as "7040", which describes unmarried people in their 40s living with their parents who are in their 70s. Many of these people in their 40s rely on their parents' pensions as they are unemployed or receive low salaries. The program said local municipalities are beginning to support such people by providing training free of charge.

SECURITY

USFJ completely lifts alcohol ban

NHK reported this morning that the USFJ headquarters lifted its alcohol ban for all U.S. military service members stationed in Japan that was imposed following the fatal DUI accident caused by a U.S. military service member last month in Okinawa. The network said the USFJ decided to lift the ban on the grounds that seminars were provided to service members on how to avoid problems related to drinking alcohol. According to the network, the USFJ lifted the ban on drinking alcohol on base on Nov. 30 and off base on Dec. 13. The network said the USFJ will continue to ban drinking

alcohol off base from 12 a.m. to 5 a.m. The network said that in addition to DUI incidents and crimes involving U.S. military service members, the number of aircraft incidents, including falling objects, is increasing, adding that people are watching closely to see whether the U.S. military will be able to prevent such incidents in the future.

Ginowan assembly adopts protest resolution in response to helicopter incident

NHK reported at noon that the Ginowan City Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution of protest calling for the suspension of flights by all U.S. military aircraft until the cause of the incident in which a window fell from a U.S. military helicopter is identified. The resolution states: "The psychological shock of the accident that occurred at a school, where safety should be ensured, is immeasurable.... Insecurity, fear, and distrust of the U.S. military have risen to a new peak." The resolution also calls for effective preventive measures and the closure and return of MCAS Futenma. The network said all of the city assembly members visited Camp Foster today to deliver the written resolution to the U.S. side.

- [Editorial: US forces need to improve safety after fallen chopper window incident](#) (The Mainichi)

OKINAWA LOCAL PRESS

Governor calls for suspension of flights by all U.S. military aircraft in Okinawa

Okinawa Times gave top play to a report on Okinawa Governor Onaga's meeting in Tokyo on Thursday with Senior Vice Defense Minister Yamamoto, during which the governor demanded that safety inspections be conducted for all U.S. military aircraft in Okinawa and that their flights be temporarily halted until such inspections are finished. The governor also called for the SOFA to be revised and MCAS Futenma to be closed in five years by telling the vice minister that the problems connected to U.S. military aircraft will not be resolved unless the SOFA is revised. The paper added that the governor also filed a protest with Charge d'Affaires Young. The paper wrote that it is extremely unusual for the local police to be given access to a U.S. base in order to investigate an incident involving the U.S. military. The paper quoted a senior prefecture official as saying: "We have been refused access in the past. This is major progress." However, the paper wrote that it remains to be seen whether the investigation by the local police will help prevent similar incidents from happening again.

Ryukyu Shimpo ran a similar inside-page report saying that Vice Minister Yamamoto did not clearly respond to the governor's request for a suspension of flights by all U.S. military aircraft in Okinawa, adding that the governor also visited MOFA and the U.S. Embassy to lodge protests.

- [Marines deny allegation that flights over school "deviate" from U.S.-Japan agreement](#) (Ryukyu Shimpo)

- [Pentagon spokesman offers apology for fallen window incident](#) (Ryukyu Shimpo)
 - [USFJ relaxes liberty, alcohol consumption policies](#) (Ryukyu Shimpo)
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